



NEWSLETTER – JANUARY 2011

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WELCOME

Welcome to the January 2011 newsletter from the Friends of Wolstonbury.

2010 was an interesting year for Wolstonbury and 2011 looks like being just as interesting and eventful.

We hope the articles in this news letter give flavour of some of the activities of the group in the last year and what has been planned for 2011. Please note in particular the 'Red Earth presents chalk' activities described by Mike below.

Steve W

Many thanks for contributions and assistance from Ian, Rod, Mike, Hilary, Margaret, Dave, Thyone, and Sarah.

UPDATED NEW YEAR MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIRMAN

Well, another year is behind us and what a year. Wolstonbury Hill has featured in a BBC series and in 2011 Wolstonbury Hill will be the base for an exciting arts project from May until October linked in with the opening of the South Downs National Park (Please see "Red Earth" notes on next page).

Both Mike & I would like to thank everyone for their continued support of Friends of Wolstonbury and the work you do in maintaining this wonderful place. Special thanks must go to Ray Howland for all his work as Treasurer and being instrumental in helping gain our National Lottery grant, without which the group may not have been established. Sadly, Ray has had to step down from his Treasurer role through ill health.

It looks like we may be in for some interesting weather – including more snow, which will make for some spectacular views of and from Wolstonbury Hill. I for one have managed to get out and get some wonderful photographs and no doubt may of you have. If so, do send them to me and I'll add them to the website. Should there is sufficient demand, I'll set up a Flickr group where you can upload them directly and link to this from the website gallery.

Do keep an eye on the activities calendar at www.wolstonbury.com/dates.htm for forthcoming events.

Wishing everyone a peaceful New Year.

Ian



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FRIENDS OF WOLSTONBURY

ACTIVITIES FOR 2011

We are a friendly group who meet for field tasks regularly throughout the year, whatever the weather! All are welcome, the young, not so young and families. We provide the tools, tea and coffee. All you need are a stout pair of walking boots or wellies, wet weather gear and food. Don't feel that joining us will mean hard work! Come along and do as much as you feel you can.

Unless otherwise stated, we meet in the slip road, near the Plough Inn, Pyecombe (TQ292125) for 10:00 AM start, or meet at the task site between 10:30am and 3:30pm

We also arrange events on the hill during the summer and have an evening meeting every four to six weeks or so, where those people interested in running the group meet to discuss current issues etc over a drink.

Firm dates are in the 'dates for your diary' table on a following page. Please check the website for latest updates:

"[http:// www.wolstonbury.com](http://www.wolstonbury.com)"



Marbled White Butterfly seen during 2010 pond survey

RED EARTH PRESENTS CHALK - 2011

As part of the 2010 celebrations to mark the creation of the South Downs National Park RED EARTH, an environmental arts group has submitted a plan to host a major arts event on the South Downs entitled CHALK. One of the planned sites for this event is Wolstonbury Hill. According to the plan CHALK is a multilayered journey into the hidden landscape, exploring the invisible layers of the South Downs.

The project involves the creation of a temporary installation on Wolstonbury probably in the bowl of the firing range to take the form of a greenwood hazel enclosure with a wattle and daub fascia. Friends of Wolstonbury have been asked to help in this task by collecting the material we routinely cut as part of our conservation programme. This can then be used to create the structure. We will be using our task days in February to focus on this work.

In addition to the installation additional walks have been arranged. These are all detailed on the 'dates for your diary' page below, and are also advertised on our website. Priority booking has been given to Friends of Wolstonbury members.

The culmination of the event will be a performance of some kind on 8/9 October which may be linked in with the Brighton Festival of World Sacred Music.

Following this the structure will be removed and the site restored to its former use.

This event is still in the planning stage and as details become available I will endeavour to keep the group up to date.

Mike Botterill
Vice President Friends of Wolstonbury



FRIENDS OF WOLSTONBURY

TASK DAYS ON WOLSTONBURY IN 2010 AND EARLIER YEARS

If you have been on Wolstonbury in the last year and seen a small group of strangely dressed people carrying ancient tools or kneeling down and mumbling un-intelligible oaths, you may have witnessed some ethereal happening, or more likely you will have stumbled upon members of one of the regular 'Friends of Wolstonbury' task days trying to light their 'Kelly kettle' to brew up a cup of tea!



Ethereal happening, or one of our task day volunteers?

The friends run regular task days, generally twice a month during autumn and winter, less often during the bird nesting season, and interspersed with other events during spring and summer. Please see the 'Dates for your diary' section below for details of future events.

We work as a support group for the National Trust, who also organise periodic task days on Wolstonbury under the 'Friends of Devils Dyke' group. The NT also supervises task days for other groups on the hill (e.g. corporate activities).

At our last AGM in October 2010, our task organiser Mike reported that in the last year we had run 16 task days, with over 20 different people participating. We have worked on fencing, path maintenance, and scrub clearance at various locations on the hill. Our main effort since starting the group in 2007 has been clearance work to assist with restoration of the 'orchid bank' in Wellcombe bottom.

Task days are held in all types of weather (often all on the same day!) as described in Margaret's article below. The work has been back breaking but very satisfying work and the fruits of our work are already evident.

There is still a lot to do, but the opening up of the orchid bank has encouraged grass, flowers and insect life to return and the fencing work will allow cattle and eventually sheep to graze and further improve the quality of the grass land.

On the cleared areas of the orchid bank below the bridleway, there are increasing numbers of wild flowers every year. This starts in spring with violets, primroses, bluebells and cowslips, followed by a fascinating array of orchids and other flowers as spring turns into summer. The unassuming twayblade seems to be the first orchid variety to return, followed by early purples, common spotted, helleborines in the shaded areas under the tress, and the beautiful 'greater butterfly' orchid. This year, some of the orchids have been almost as large as hyacinths (as pictured on the right).

The discovery of a fly orchid by David Lang, as seen in the BBC 'Secret Britain' program shown in August last year was a very proud moment for us, being found in an area of the orchid bank we helped clear 3 years ago. Please see the fascinating article by Dave Pearce, below, for a more analytical survey of orchids.





FRIENDS OF WOLSTONBURY

WOLSTONBURY WEATHER & THE HIDDEN DELIGHTS OF TASK DAYS

The weather during our working sessions over the past year has been very varied. We have worked in sun, rain, hail and wind, only the snow in the winter defeating us when we had to totally abandon the task day!



For example, the day we carried out the pond survey in July we enjoyed a blue sky and a high temperature. The water level in the dew pond was very low despite there having been a very wet winter and spring. We noted down the many plants and aquatic species present and had finished the survey by lunch time (work in progress in the picture on the left!) when the 'experts' left, their work over. This left three of us to our own devices. We took ourselves off to the 'orchid bank' for lunch and then spent a delightful afternoon sitting in the sunshine watching the butterflies and turning ourselves into experts on St John's- Wort by identifying and comparing the differences between Hairy and Perforate St John's-Wort.

What a change there was in November when we were once again on the 'orchid bank'. This time it was damp and slippery. We managed to eat our lunch in the dry and get a hot drink when a reluctant Kelly kettle finally decided to perform. We had just started on the scrub clearing and raking when the sky became almost black, thunder and lightening were all around us and we became engulfed in a tremendous hail storm. This eventually left the ground covered in a layer of icy hailstones but the sun shone on us again as we resumed our tasks.

So, come rain or shine this happy band of volunteers continues with our task of befriending Wolstonbury.

M.M. 17.11.10



EVENTS ORGANISED BY THE GROUP DURING SUMMER 2010

During 2010 the friends organised a number of events on Wolstonbury, including a Bird Walk, Butterfly walk, and Pond survey. We also participated in the Orchid safari guided by the National Trust, and members of the group assisted with open days at Saddlescombe Farm.

For the **pond survey** on 8th July, the group was greatly assisted by Ian Hartle from South Downs Joint Committee and Thyone Outram, who was the driving force for setting up 'Friends of Wolstonbury' in 2007. Many thanks to Ian and Thyone for this work, and it was great to see them again. The survey was rather disappointing as the dew pond water level was low and the water was very murky. Several types of newt were provisionally identified. However, it was a lovely sunny day and a very pleasant afternoon was spent identifying insects and flowers.



Six Spot Burnet moth, photographed by Thyone during the 2010 pond survey.

Coincidentally this moth was described in a Daily Telegraph article around the same time:

"A colourful but poisonous moth, safe in the knowledge that it's bold red spots will scare off potential predators. It seems to like the field scabius flower and can fly safely during the day because it's spots alert predators that it makes a dangerous meal – containing Hydrogen Cyanide!!"

Neil Hulme of Sussex Butterfly Conservation guided the **Butterfly walk** on 23rd May. The event was well attended and the start was enlivened by Bob, who guides the bird walk, releasing a large hornet that he had captured earlier in his kitchen, causing a mass run for cover!!! There was a good cover of cowslips on the hill and we saw an interesting array of butterflies and moths. Neil's tally included:

Adonis Blue (2), Small Blue (3), Common Blue (15), Green Hairstreak (6), Small Heath (4), Dingy Skipper (15), Speckled Wood (7), Orange Tip (3), Green-veined White (1), Holly Blue (1), Brimstone (1) and Small Tortoiseshell (1)

Highlights included separate sightings of male and female Green Hairstreaks and an Adonis Blue, but no sign of the Painted Lady butterflies that we saw in such abundance in 2009.

Graham Welfare, one of the local National Trust wardens, guided the **Orchid Safari** on 13th June. This was extremely well attended and had to be split into two groups. On the way up to the hill from the Jack & Jill pub, Graham pointed out the large beech trees, planted about 200 years ago by local estates. These are now starting to fall apart, with limbs falling off and impressive bracket fungi on dead limbs. On the orchid bank, Graham said it was possible to see nine species of orchid. We identified early purples (nearly over by then), lots of common spotted, twayblades, and greater butterfly orchids, a fly orchid, and several helleborines. Graham also said that Wolstonbury has always been famous for orchids, having been botanised by Alfred Russel Wallace in the 19th century.

On the way up past the dew pond we saw burnet moths and mullion moth caterpillars on mullion leaves. On other parts of the hill we found the shy and rare man orchid, a lot of common spotted, and bunches of fragrant orchids. Graham also pointed out the many ant hills, which are a feature of Wolstonbury and are indicators of ancient grassland.



FRIENDS OF WOLSTONBURY

Scrub Clearance Improves Environment for Orchids

Following the extensive and ongoing work of tree and scrub clearance on the north slopes of Wellcombe Bottom, it is pleasing to see the much improved numbers of flowering native orchids. Apart from the ubiquitous twayblade and common spotted orchids, the early purple and white helleborine continue to thrive and maintain good populations. What has been of particular importance is the growing numbers of fly and greater butterfly orchids.

The greater butterfly orchid (*plantanthera chlorantha*) is one of a number in the UK which is being monitored by researchers at Kew Gardens with particular interest in the plant's anatomy. The number of plants flowering on this site six years ago was about twenty, but since the brambles and bushes have been cleared the number of flowering plants has significantly increased to around 350 (in 2010). With this number of plants the research data supplied to Kew Gardens can provide a representative sample of the size and structure of these orchids.



Impressively sized 'Greater Butterfly' orchid on the orchid bank on 13th June 2010

Other data recorded for this site is the effect of shading by trees and scrub together with the altitude and latitude. This data is being correlated with similar measurements taken at other flowering sites throughout Europe. Of particular interest is the spur length of individual flowers, being that part of the flower which contains nectar and is the attraction for pollinating insects. With the greater butterfly orchid the spur is of the order of 30mm in length and therefore the nectar can only be reached by insects that have a proboscis of similar length.

In this case it is believed that the night flying family of hawk moths are the pollinators. The length of the proboscis and the length of the plant spur are found to reduce with increasing latitude. It would seem then that natural selection has played its part in the synergetic behaviour between plant and pollinator. Data has been provided from this site on Wolstonbury for four years, and with continued care of the local environment a good population of butterfly orchids can be maintained for the future.

The fly Orchid (*ophrys insectifera*) has also become more abundant following the scrub clearance. Last year it was of great interest to find a BBC film team recording the pollination of a flower by a digger wasp in its act of pseudo-copulation. The pollination rates for this plant are known to be very poor and it is essential to maintain a significant flowering population to ensure the retention of this native orchid.

Dave Pearce
Friends of Wolstonbury
January 2011



FRIENDS OF WOLSTONBURY

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY 2011

Firm dates are in the table below. Please check the website "[http:// www.wolstonbury.com](http://www.wolstonbury.com)" for latest updates.

2011 DATES	MEET	ACTIVITY
Friday 4 th February	10.00am @ Plough Pyecombe	Scrub Clearance task. Bring Stout shoes and packed lunch This task will involve collecting the cut material for use in the creation of the Red Earth Installation.
Saturday 19 th February	10.00am @ Plough Pyecombe	Continuation of 4 th February task. Cut material from this event will be used to build the Red Earth Installation on the hill.
Friday 4 th March	10.00am @ Plough	Scrub Clearance.
Saturday 19 th March	10.00am @ Plough	Scrub removal
Friday 1 st April	10.00am @ Plough	Scrub Clearance.
Saturday 16 th April	10.00am @ Plough	Scrub removal
Sunday 15 th May	To be advised	Butterfly Walk Provisional date, details to be confirmed
Saturday 21 st May	14.00 @ Plough Pyecombe	Red Earth Chalk Walk: Natural Navigation Part of the Red Earth series of walks - landscape navigation with neither map nor compass. Booking Essential 01243814554. F.O.W members have booking priority. Cost adult £4, child £2, Family £9, Dogs on lead, suitable for groups, children 8+ Expected duration 14.00 to 16.30
Sunday 22 nd May	14.00 @ Plough Pyecombe	Red Earth Chalk Walk: Archaeology Explore the archaeology of Wolstonbury with archaeologist Matt Pope. Booking essential 01243814554. F.O.W members have booking priority. Cost Adult £4, Child £2, Family £9. Dogs on lead. Suitable for groups, children 8+ Expected duration 14.00 to 16.30
Saturday 28 th May	10.30 @ Plough Pyecombe	Red Earth Chalk Walk: Wild Plant Foraging Spend the day gathering and preparing remedies and wild food on site. Booking Essential 01243814554. F.O.W members have priority booking. Adult £6, Child £3, Family £14. Dogs on leads Suitable for groups and children 8+ Expected duration 10.30 to 15.30
Sunday 5 th June	10.30 @ Plough Pyecombe	Red Earth Chalk Walk: Orchid Walk Explore the flora of Wolstonbury Hill with National Trust Warden Graham Welfare. Booking Essential 0124381455. F.O.W members have priority booking. Adult £4, Child £2, Family £9. Dogs on lead, suitable for groups. Expected duration 10.30 to 13.30

MEMBERSHIP

If you are an existing member and would like to renew your membership, if you would like to join, or if you know someone who would like to join, please cut out the relevant membership form below, fill it in, and either post it with your remittance to Rod Scott at the specified address or hand it and your remittance to one of the committee members.



MEMBERSHIP Application

To join Friends of Wolstonbury and help us protect and preserve the landscape, wildlife, and learn more about the history of Wolstonbury Hill, complete this form and send it with your payment to:

Friends of Wolstonbury
C/o Rod Scott, Secretary
Oaklands, Oreham Common, Henfield
West Sussex BN5 9SB

Membership is only £7.50 per family. Members receive regular newsletters, details of events, tasks and membership card.

Name: _____
Address: _____
Post Code: _____
Telephone: _____
Email: _____

Membership: £ 7.50

Voluntary Donation: £ _____

I enclose my payment of £ _____

Cash ☐ Cheque ☐ Payable to "Friends of Wolstonbury"

Please tick as applicable

Signature: _____

PHOTOCOPIES ACCEPTED

By completing this application you agree that Friends of Wolstonbury may contact you regarding matters relating to Wolstonbury Hill by mail, telephone or email. We respect your privacy and be assured that your information will not be passed to third parties.

FoW Use Only

Membership No: _____